



LOUISIANA Conservation Update

Conservation –
A Role for All
Including the Small!









Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

MAY 2023

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NOTES FROM THE STATE CONSERVATIONIST

It's Spring in Louisiana. What a wonderful time of year! As I look around at all of the new growth and renewal taking place, it reinforces the importance of our mission of helping people help the land. Here at NRCS, we're renewing our efforts to provide more frequent and consistent Conservation Updates to highlight some of the good work involved in conserving and maintaining our natural resources. When we talk about conservation, we often focus on larger scale conservation efforts where we have maximum impact. However, we all play a role in conservation stewardship. And, we all reap the benefits of good conservation practices – through the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the food we eat. In this Spring edition, the first of many updates to come, we wanted to highlight the conservation efforts of urban and small-scale agriculture. In addition to helping increase greenspace and providing income, urban and small-scale agricultural operations often play a role in education that may reconnect people to the land and point the next generation into careers in agriculture. They also increase local access to healthy food and have positive and lasting social impacts on their communities. I hope you enjoy reading about our small but mighty partners and are encouraged to get more involved in supporting the conservation efforts of your local small-scale farms.



Yours in conservation,

Chad Kacir
State Conservationist



IN-FOCUS: URBAN AND SMALL-SCALE AGRICULTURE



CONSERVATION

A ROLE FOR ALL INCLUDING THE SMALL!

PARTNERSHIPS WITH NRCS

NRCS encourages all farmers, ranchers, and landowners to practice conservation and good natural resources stewardship. No matter the size of your operation, we want to help you help the land. That help comes in the form of technical assistance and cost-share programs for implementing conservation practices to address natural resource concerns. Many urban and small-scale farms and ranches sometimes assume that NRCS programs are only for large operations. We want to bust that myth. The fact is, NRCS leads the USDA's [Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production \(OUAIP\)](#). No matter your size, NRCS offers assistance to help meet your conservation goals. If you want to know more about our programs or want to talk with a local NRCS representative, [contact your local office.](#)

Many small-scale farmers have taken advantage of NRCS programs in order to help accomplish their conservation goals. In addition to improving conservation, they may also benefit from increased production and cost savings. For instance, through the [EQIP program](#), producers may qualify for financial assistance through co-investments for [high tunnels](#) which extend growing seasons while addressing conservation concerns. We've highlighted a couple of our partnerships and smaller operations that have benefited from NRCS assistance in this issue.

Continued on next page

Donna Isaacs has partnered with NRCS through her work with [*Campti Field of Dreams*](#) and works to educate others on sustainability and conservation practices. Donna recently planned a couple of no-till field days for small-scale producers. We joined her events on her own farm – DelaTerre Permaculture – in Eros and at [*Jubilee Justice*](#) in Alexandria. These events provided a wealth of information and resources for small-scale producers and an opportunity to meet and network with other farmers and NRCS and other USDA representatives. For more information on our [*partnership*](#) and opportunities to learn and connect, check out [*Campti's website*](#).



[*Jubilee Justice*](#) is a non-profit that seeks to heal and transform the wounds suffered by the people and the land through reparative genealogy and regenerative agriculture. They were chosen as one of 21 historically underserved producers to participate in the Campti Field of Dreams No-Till Organic Market Garden program. Jubilee Justice is committed to the environment and regenerative agriculture. Through their Black Farmers' Rice Project and a [*System of Rice Intensification \(SRI\)*](#), they are working with black farmers to change their economics. The SRI project at Jubilee Justice is the first in the US and includes a cohort of farmers in Louisiana and several other states. Simply put, the SRI method is sustainable rice production that involves fewer inputs and higher yields all while nourishing the land and results in greater income for farmers.



USDA-ARS NO-TILL TOOLS DEMONSTRATION

USDA's Agriculture Research Service participated in the No-Till Tools for Small Applications events. Dr. Ted Kornecki and Corey Kichler demonstrated a ride-on version of a patented 2-stage roller/crimper and a patented no-till transplanter for walk-behind tractors developed at the USDA-ARS, National Soil Dynamics Lab (NSDL) in Auburn, AL. They also brought along a patented powered roller/crimper for walk behind tractors.



Dr. Kornecki said, "It's like what happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas... Sustainable agriculture with cover crops is so important to improve soil health, not allowing organic matter, soil particles and nutrients to leave the field."



If you are interested in learning more about the tools demonstrated by ARS or would like to make one for use on your own operation, please contact Dr. Kornecki or Corey Kichler.



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NRCS RAINFALL SIMULATOR

NRCS also participated in the No-Till Tools for Small Scale Applications events. Local Louisiana NRCS staff along with Regional Soil Health Specialists Josh Beniston and Willie Durham from the [Soil Health Division](#) presented information and provided soil health demonstrations to show the benefits of practices such as [no-till](#) and [cover crops](#) to soil health. They stressed the four main components of ensuring good soil health – 1) minimizing soil disturbance through practices such as no-till, 2) maximizing diversity through practices such as planting cover crops, 3) maintaining live roots as much as possible through practices such as planting cover crops and using no-till techniques, and 4) maintaining cover as much as possible through practices such as cover crops to protect the soil from harsh weather and temperatures.

To learn more about how NRCS can help you enrich your soil, please [contact your local office](#).





LOUISIANA GRAZING LANDS CONSERVATION INITIATIVE, INC. (LGLCI)

The [Louisiana Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative, Inc.](#) (LGLCI) has also partnered with NRCS and works to better equip producers, agencies, and the public to make conservation and climate smart decisions for Louisiana agriculture. Through this partnership, LGLCI promotes and encourages beginning farmers and ranchers, veterans, and underserved groups to recognize the importance of soil health, range and pasture management, and nutrient management as well as other natural resource concerns associated with grazing operations.

They recently hosted a Pasture Walk at [Starkey Farmstead](#) in Greensburg. Samantha Starkey and her family are committed to becoming producers instead of consumers and have implemented a number of sustainable practices and conservation techniques that are allowing them to realize their goals of being completely self-sufficient.

DEEP WATERING

Samantha at Starkey Farmstead uses a deep watering method to help her plants establish deep roots and maximize watering efficiency. Samantha uses a combination of water, worm castings, compost, and rabbit manure to nourish her plants.



BIO-CHAR

Biochar is what you get when you burn organic material in a low oxygen environment. Adding this material to soil can enrich it resulting in better health, increased production, and improved water retention of plants.

ANIMAL AGRICULTURE



WORM CASTINGS

Worm castings is just a fancy way of saying worm poop and it's an excellent way to amend soil. Given the right conditions (proper temperature, moisture, and pH), the red wigglers used at Starkey Farmstead produce rich worm castings that serve as a natural fertilizer that costs next to nothing.



URBAN AND SMALL-SCALE AGRICULTURE

In Fall 2022, we proudly announced [the dedication](#) of the [Sankofa Community Development Garden](#) in New Orleans as Louisiana's first [People's Garden](#).

Sankofa is one of 17 flagship gardens located in urban communities nationwide. Since the dedication, Sankofa has been working hard on their mission to build healthier communities for generations to come. They are an excellent example of what the People's Garden is all about. They grow plants using sustainable practices that benefit people and wildlife and they teach their community about local, resilient food systems.



During a recent visit to the garden, a community member stopped by to tell us about her experience in finding inspiration in the Sankofa garden to start her own garden a few blocks away. She's already sharing the knowledge she's gained from Sankofa and encouraging others to start their own gardens. Sankofa also works with faith-based partners and is helping churches in the community with their gardens. The ripple

of effects of the Sankofa People's Garden is already evident and we are excited to see the expansion and growth of gardens throughout New Orleans as a result of their work.



To learn more about the People's Garden, please visit: <https://www.usda.gov/peoples-garden>.



UPCOMING EVENTS

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MAY

LGLCI - EVENING ON THE CRAWFISH FARM

Educational and family friendly crawfish, rice, and cattle farm experience! Catch crawfish in the ditch, shuck corn, see rice growing, plant a plant, pet a farm animal, take family pictures in the native prairie. Then settle in for a crawfish dinner and an agricultural documentary on the lawn.

TIME & LOCATION:

5:00 PM – 8:30 PM

Coastal Prairie Nursery, LLC, 459 Sonny Rd.
Eunice, LA 70535

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

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TRAILBLAZERS RC&D - TREE TROUBLES - YARD/FORESTS WORKSHOP WITH RICKY KILPATRICK

Timber expert Ricky Kilpatrick will discuss common tree problems and solutions for trees in north Louisiana. This workshop is open to the public. Anyone interested in learning more about tree diseases and pests, either in a home landscape or a production forest, should attend.

TIME & LOCATION:

6:00 PM - 7:30 PM

Bossier Parish Libraries History Center,
2206 Beckett St., Bossier City, LA

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

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& 21
MAY

25TH ANNUAL TUNICA-BILOXI POW WOW

This annual public event, held on the Tunica-Biloxi Reservation in Marksville, welcomes various regional indigenous tribes to celebrate culture through vibrant craft displays, music performances, dance presentations and cultural exhibits. An assortment of interactive events and live performances throughout the weekend aims to highlight the history and traditions of the Tribe.

TIME & LOCATION:

SATURDAY: 10:00 AM - 7:00 PM

SUNDAY: 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Chief Joseph Alcide Pierite Pow Wow Grounds on the Tunica-Biloxi Reservation
LA Hwy. 1, Marksville, LA

[FIND OUT MORE](#)



JOB OPENINGS

ASSISTANT STATE SOIL SCIENTIST

GS-0470-12

MORE INFORMATION - <https://www.usajobs.gov/job/720102400>

Locations: Alexandria, Monroe, Opelousas, Ruston

ENGINEERING TECHNICIAN (CIVIL),

GS-0802-8/9

MORE INFORMATION - <https://www.usajobs.gov/job/720175100>

Locations: Crowley, New Iberia, Opelousas

PROGRAM ASSISTANT

GS-0344-5/7

MORE INFORMATION - <https://www.usajobs.gov/job/720177600>

Locations: Crowley, New Iberia, Opelousas





NRCS IN ACTION



CIG AWARDS

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is investing \$40 million this year for 31 new projects through its Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) program, one of the ways USDA brings together partners to develop innovative approaches to climate-smart agriculture. These investments emphasize adoption and implementation of climate-smart practices, including nutrient management, which helps producers manage nutrients and soil amendments to maximize their economic benefit while minimizing their environmental impact. Louisiana State University (LSU) is the recipient of both CIG On-Farm and CIG Classic funding. NRCS awarded LSU \$1,036,830 for CIG On-Farm funding and \$553,413 for CIG Classic Funding.

PRESS RELEASE: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/conservation-by-state/louisiana/news/usdanrcs-announces-two-conservation>



GLCI AWARDS

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced awards of \$12 million in cooperative agreements for 49 projects that expand access to conservation technical assistance for livestock producers and increase the use of conservation practices on grazing lands. The funding is provided through the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI). Louisiana Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative, Inc received one of these awards for their efforts to develop Louisiana conservation leaders. Their project seeks to build leaders in conservation through in-depth expert trainings. They plan to expand partnerships and digital resources through outreach and videos, strengthen their relationship with NRCS, allow agents to receive credits in their home state, and remove financial barriers for underserved producers to attend national events.

PRESS RELEASE: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/conservation-by-state/louisiana/news/usdanrcs-announces-land-cooperative>



IMPORTANT DATES



CONJUNCTIVE WATER USE REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (RCPP)

- DEADLINE: May 19th
- PRESS RELEASE: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/conservation-by-state/louisiana/news/usdanrcs-is-accepting-applications-for-the>
- FACT SHEET: https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2023-04/RCPP_Conjunctive-Water-Use_Factsheet_0.pdf

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